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ABSTRACT

Hampered by budget restrictions and looked to for innovations to influence national economics, postsecondary educational leaders should not overlook an obvious responsibility: articulation of programs with the secondary systems to counteract youthful unemployment, a problem whose magnitude statistics reveal. A continuum of education without unnecessary duplication of instruction or delay in students' attainment of career objectives must be developed, for educational separatism has reached a point of diminishing returns. The establishment of an articulated agreement between educational levels is a three-phase process: (1) a formal letter of agreement between the systems involved, based on meetings between administrators; (2) program letters of agreement, based on meetings between faculties; and (3) evaluation, review, and revision, based on input from all involved parties. Seven items should be considered for inclusion in the first letter of agreement. The next phase, more laborious, can be achieved by taking outlined steps; there are three minimum requirements for the second letter of agreement. There are broad guidelines for the evaluation phase. The greatest problem is attitudinal: educators should remember that allowing or refusing persons enrollment in postsecondary studies significantly influences their chances of success throughout their lives, and contributes to the nation's economic and social situation. (Author/AJ)

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ARTICULATION WITH SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ARTICULATION WITH SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Vocational Education today faces perhaps the greatest challenges and responsibilities it has ever had to face. In a period of economic crisis characterized by spiraling inflation, recession and high unemployment, state and federal agencies have been forced to adopt budget restraints that reflected little or no funding increases for publicly supported agencies. During the same period, Vocational Education has been looked to by state, federal, and local leaders as a possible mechanism for influencing the economic conditions facing our nation. The Commissioner of Education, among others, has called for creative leadership to re-educate the unemployed, under-employed, and under-educated in an attempt to provide the manpower and skills needed in special employment categories of our work force. Educational leaders at all levels have been issued the challenge to exercise their imagination and educational expertise to develop and implement innovative educational systems and methods that will be effective in today's environment.

Historically, Vocational Education has been a dynamic force in bringing about change in our educational systems and in introducing new and innovative methods into the educational process. It is my hope, however, that as we, as educational leaders, attempt to exert ourselves and our concepts concerning innovation in vocational education in an effort to have some measurable impact on our nation's current status, we do not become victims of looking past one of the most obvious tasks and responsibilities that we have in post-secondary education -- that of establishing articulated programs of study with the secondary school systems.

I am certain that as we discuss the economic situation, the high rates of unemployment, the under-educated, and under-employed, our first thoughts turn to the millions of adults that have been displaced, released from work, laid off, or severed from their jobs. We definitely have a responsibility to be aware of these conditions and to seek methods of reacting in such a manner as to allow

for some measurable impact. We need to develop methods of bringing displaced or unemployed workers into the educational system for retraining in areas where jobs exist; we need to be aware of the changing employment and economic needs of our communities, states, and nation; we need to be flexible, innovative, and responsive. However, concurrent with our efforts to keep informed and to be responsive to the changing conditions of employment, unemployment, industrial and business needs, technological advances, and a constantly changing economic environment, we must not loose sight of an important sector of our population that enters this effervescent environment annually.

Last year our public and private high schools graduated 3,095,000 students (Grant, 1974); our secondary schools have been graduating over 3 million students annually since 1971; and it is projected by the Office of Education (Simon, 1974) that our schools will continue to graduate over 3 million students annually through 1981. These 3 million plus students generally follow one of three directions after graduation: (1) they enter post-secondary education, (2) they enter the labor market and become employed, or (3) they enter the labor market and become unemployed. In 1973, over 53 percent of the high school graduates did not enter post-secondary education on either a full-time or part-time basis (Grant, 1974). This means that in 1973 we had over 1,634,000 students aged 16 to 19 enter the labor market. Traditionally, in as many years as one can look back, the 16 to 19 year old age group has represented the demographic sector with the highest unemployment in the nation. In 1974 this group represented 16 percent of the unemployed workers (Manpower Report of the President, 1975). When we consider that this phenomenon occurs annually, without exception, the magnitude of the problem becomes apparent.

It is a real challenge for us as leaders in education to attempt to develop methods, procedures, or processes that will have some impact on this large segment of our population. One of the methods I would like to suggest that you

consider as a means of dealing with this situation is the development of articulation agreements with secondary schools and school systems in your area of operations to assist these students in developing skills and knowledge levels that will lead them toward immediate and continuing employment.

In order that we might embark along the same path from this point, allow me to establish a working definition for articulation. Good's Dictionary of Education defines articulation as:

> "...the organization of classroom instruction, co-curricular activities, and other interdependent and interrelated services of the school system so as to facilitate the continuous and efficient educational process of students from grade to grade and from school to school; ...also, the inter-relation of the school's instructional program with the educational programs of other available institutions or work opportunities." (1973)

Webster indicates that "to articulate" may mean, ... to form or fit into a systematic whole (as in articulating a program for all school grades)."

Both of the above definitions contain key words or phrases that assist us in understanding the full parameters of the term articulation as I am advocating its use today. On the one hand Good indicates it is an activity, designed to facilitate "the continuous and efficient educational process"; on the other hand, Webster indicates it is the act of forming or fitting "into a systematic whole". The key words here are systematic, continuous, and efficient. Both definitions refer to a concept of a continuum within the educational process.

From these definitions we may conclude that we are discussing the feasibility of developing a systematic process within and between educational systems that will facilitate the movement of students from one educational level or grade to the next, based on the inter-relationship of the programs involved. The primary objective of this activity is to provide for the development of a continuum of education to allow each student to develop to his full potential

without unnecessary duplication of instruction and delay in attaining his educational and career objectives.

It is much easier to understand how we arrived at our current position than it is to explain methods for breaking out of the mold and changing deeply rooted beliefs and philosophies. We are all aware of the evolutionary process through which our present educational systems developed. As the challenge for more and better education was issued from the American population, the challenge was met through the creation of systems of educational institutions designed to meet certain levels of educational needs and specialization (Bender, 1973). The development of these educational systems resulted in the institutional stratification that we are all familiar with today. We have elementary schools, middle schools, junior high schools, secondary schools, junior colleges, community colleges, technical institutes, technical colleges, business colleges, universities, and on and on.

The numbers and types of educational institutions that exist within stratified levels today are astonishing. As these educational systems developed, separatism became a method of establishing strength and identify. Very little, if any, effort was exerted by anyone at any of the levels to attempt to analyze and correlate their educational process. Each justified their own existence by establishing separate identities.

We, as Vocational Educators, have been as guilty of this effort to establish and maintain separatism as anyone else in the field of education. And, quite frankly, the efforts in this direction were probably warranted and needed at the time. It is important for us to realize, however, that as times change and conditions warrant we must be flexible in our efforts to provide well-planned and systematic educational programs. As Louis Bender (1973) stated in a publication on articulation of secondary and post-secondary occupational education programs, it is time that we realized and accepted the fact that educational

separatism has reached a point of diminishing returns. Continued efforts in this direction will be detrimental to our education system and the students we attempt to serve. We must not lose sight of the fact that our function is as a service agency, our objective is to prepare people for employment, our allegiance is to our community and to our students, and our responsibility is to discharge our duties in a manner that will be efficient and effective in assisting us and our students in reaching our established goals. An excellent tool to assist us in performing these duties and responsibilities is articulation with the secondary school systems. This conceptual approach involves the development of educational systems that measure results by student performance, no matter where or how the student learned, rather than the utilization of blocks of courses delivered in a traditional mode to establish credibility of knowledge on the part of the student. It is our challenge to design, develop, and implement methods that will enable us to establish a true continuum within the educational delivery system that will enable students to capitalize on their individual knowledge and skills rather than being victimized by a lock-step approach to education.

The establishment of an articulated agreement between educational levels is not an easy task, nor one that can be conceived and implemented in a short period of time. The task must be approached with a total commitment toward establishing the relationship. The effort extended must be a team effort on the part of all involved. The process of establishing the agreement involves the development of a series of formal and complex relationships, but the benefits derived from its establishment will be great and rewarding.

The establishment of an articulated agreement between educational levels is at least a three phase process. The first phase should involve the establishment of a formal letter of agreement between the educational systems involved based on meetings between administrative personnel; the second phase should

involve the establishment of program letters of agreement, based on formal meetings between faculty members of complimentary curriculum; and the third phase involves evaluation, review, and revision, based on input from all parties involved.

The formal letter of agreement between the educational systems can take many forms and include various types of information and provisions. Some of the items you may want to consider for inclusion in the agreement are as follows:

(a) The forms of articulation

Articulation can be effected in many different ways. It may allow for the early release of secondary school students from their home institution for the purpose of pursuing college-level education at a post-secondary institution on either a full-time or part-time basis; it may allow for the advance placement of secondary school graduates in post-secondary level educational programs based on successful completion of a secondary-level curriculum; it may allow for advance granting of credit by the post-secondary institution based on successful completion of a secondary program of study; or it may allow for the granting of credit by the post-secondary institution based on demonstrated levels of knowledge or skills, or both, by the student, as determined through the process of credit by examination. While the form of articulation may be established in the letter of agreement between the educational systems, the actual method involved should be specified in the separate program letters of articulation.

(b) The student populations that will be eligible to particpate

Generally, in an articulation agreement the identified student populations that may participate include full-time students currently

enrolled in the secondary school systems, at either the junior or senior levels, and students who have successfully graduated from a secondary level program of study. It is incumbent upon the secondary level educational system to establish procedures to identify students whom they are willing to release from classes to participate in the articulation agreement. Similarly, it is incumbent upon the post-secondary institution to identify any prerequisites that may be desirable to require of incoming students. These prerequisites should not be different from those that are required of any other student entering the program of study.

(c) Financial considerations

Institutions participating in the articulation must determine the manner in which the educational costs will be handled for students who are released from secondary schools to participate in the agreement. Students entering the post-secondary level will have to be assessed tuition and fees equivalent to the academic load they pursue. The participating institutions must consider whether the student will have to pay their own fees or whether the secondary level system is willing to reimburse the college for the cost of enrolling the student in college level classes. The institutions involved should explore State policies concerning allocation of funds to educational institutions to insure they are not operating outside state laws in the exchange of funds, should such a decision be reached.

If a decision is reached to have the student bear the burden of the cost of the post-secondary level instruction, the college should explore the feasibility of including secondary-level students in consideration for financial aid for those students who need assistance and can qualify

under identified programs.

(d) Transportation

The educational systems involved must decide whether they are going to provide transportation from the secondary schools to the colleges for those students on a part-time release program.

(e) Student dismissals or withdrawals

Included within any articulation agreement should be a consideration for the handling of students who may be academically or disciplinarily dismissed from the college based on established policies and regulations. Additionally, consideration should be made for the student who may wish to withdraw voluntarily from the college and return to the secondary school. In either case, the method of returning the student to the secondary level should be a non-punitive one so the student will not be hindered in his effort to graduate from the secondary school system, and will not be hindered in future efforts to pursue post-secondary level education.

(f) Faculty sharing

It is quite possible that faculty members at the secondary or post-secondary levels may possess exceptional skills or knowledge in their specialty areas that are not possessed at the complimentary levels of the educational system. Where this is found to exist, it may be desirable for the parties involved to develop a method where faculty members may be shared at the different levels so students will be able to derive maximum benefits from the knowledge and skills available in the school systems. These arrangements can be as complex or as simple as the parties involved may desire. The sharing may allow only for the use of faculty members for special demonstrations or lectures, or it may allow for the use of a faculty member for an entire course. These

activities need to be planned well in advance and closely coordinated to insure effective implementation. In some instances, financial reimbursement may be a necessary part of the agreement.

(g) Information dissemination

Any method or process of education that may be adopted by a school system is of little avail if students are not aware of the opportunities and advantages of participating in the program, or, if they are not made aware of the program early enough in their education endeavors to plan ahead and insure their qualification for participation. Once an articulation agreement has been reached and implemented by a school system, significant efforts should be made through all available channels to inform potential students of the availability of the program and methods of qualifying and enrolling in it. Some school systems have adopted programs such as career orientation, career awareness, Introduction to Vocations, and so on in an effort to assist students in making career and educational decisions. Inclusion of the opportunities of participation in an articulated approach to education would be most appropriate for these types of programs. Other information could be disseminated through individual counseling, classroom instruction, PTA meetings, community organizations, local newspaper, radio, and television spots, and any other means that would insure widespread dissemination of the information. The idea should be a saturation of the information to parents, students, and teachers.

Once a formalized articulation letter of agreement between educational levels has been drafted and approved by the appropriate governing bodies of the school system, the second step is to provide opportunities for faculty of the two systems to meet and begin an exploration of course and program content to determine the extent of articulation that can take place.

This step is perhaps the most difficult and laborous of the entire process. Great amounts of effort and energy must be expended on the part of the faculty involved in order to determine the extent of similarity or duplication of content between the two instructional systems. A comparative analysis of the learning objectives, expected levels of proficiency, methods of measuring proficiency levels, and instructional techniques are a few of the types of activities that would be appropriate for inclusion in a meeting between faculty. Each faculty member should become confident that they fully understand what takes place at the complimentary level and the extent to which that activity supports or supplants their own instructional programs. Identification of areas of duplication or similarity then form the basis for continuing in discussions and developing a program letter of agreement that will allow for articulation between the educational systems for that particular program of study.

The program letter of agreement developed by the faculty members should include as a minimum:

(a) A delineation of the areas where duplication or similarity of instruction was noted.

(b) An identification of the specific types of articulation that can be effected based on the similarities that were noted (i.e. advance placement without credit, advance placement with credit, or credit by examination).

(c) Pre-requisites for enrollment in the post-secondary programs of study, if pre-requisites were found to be desirable.

The program letter of agreement should then be processed through the appropriate offices of the agencies involved for approval and inclusion

into the formal letter of agreement between the educational systems.

The third phase of the articulation process involves evaluation, review and revision based on input provided by all parties involved in the agreement. Faculty members should meet freely and often to discuss the progress that has been made, the performance levels of students participating in the agreement, and areas where improvement is perceived to be needed. Administrative personnel should monitor the implementation of the agreement closely in order to identify and solve any problem areas that may arise that were not identified in the negotiation stages. Student input should be sought from those students participating in the agreement in order to determine how they felt the agreement was working, restraints that may have been effected that were not necessary, areas where they feel future articulation should be attempted, and their ability to function in the environments created for them by the agreement. The critical part of the evaluation and review is that all parties need to be open and honest in their expressed opinions and should receive criticism as constructive in nature. Turftsmanship and self-interest is not a trait that has any place in articulation.

There are many problems that may be encountered during the process of developing the articulation agreement. The college may have reservations about changing entrance requirements for certain programs if they do not practice the open-door philosophy; the financial considerations encountered may be of a complex nature and require extended effort to resolve so the agreement may be implemented; courses and programs of study may not be fully developed or documented to allow for the in-depth analysis required to determine whether articulation is feasible; it may be extremely difficult to schedule time for the faculty members to get

together on a one-to-one basis to explore and analyze complementary programs. However, probably the greatest problem that must be overcome in establishing and implementing an articulated agreement is attitudinal. Almost everyone recognizes the problem, but there are very few who are willing to attempt a solution. Instructors and faculty members for some reason tend to be very reserved and protective when someone begins talking about the concept of articulation. Many are convinced that the only way to establish credibility of knowledge and skills is to have the students enroll and complete their particular programs of study. This is not only true between secondary and post-secondary levels, but also tends to be true between community colleges in transferring students, and between the two-year colleges and the four-year colleges when students wish to pursue a baccalaureate degree.

Now is the time for us, as educational leaders, to examine our own positions, and philosophies, and priorities and determine what impact we will have collectively on education in general and the nation as a whole. It is obvious that we can have a significant impact in terms of preparing students for employment and making available to potentially unemployed or underemployed high school graduates a chance they might not otherwise have had. Peter Drucker (1974) made reference to the tremendous power held by our nation's educational system in his latest book titled Management when he indicated that by allowing a person to enroll in post-secondary studies or refusing that person enrollment status, we can significantly influence the success or failure that individual will experience in his lifetime. The sobering truth in the matter is that we not only affect the individual involved, but we also contribute to the social and economic problems confronting our nation today.

Post-secondary occupational education has the opportunity as well as the responsibility to respond to this pressing need for articulation between stratified levels of education. Articulated programs of study will not solve all of our problems, nor will it insure the educational success of all who take advantage of the opportunity. It will, however, be a major step in establishing a true continuum of education for the citizens of our nation, and by so doing may provide a natural avenue to the more than one million high school graduates who annually enter the ranks of the unemployed.

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